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Presentations	Session 2.1	*Rethinking forest entrepreneurship and policy as a newly emerging cross-sectoral field: Insights from theory and empirics.*

Abstract Session 2.1 – Identifying drivers of forest clearances in Switzerland.

Deforestation is prohibited in Switzerland, as in most European countries. The Swiss Forest Act specifies that the area and spatial distribution of the Swiss forest must be conserved. Deforestation is thereby defined as an either temporary or permanent change in use of forest land for non-forestry purposes. However, exemptions from the ban on forest clearing may be granted under well-defined conditions, e.g. when important needs outweigh the interest of forest conservation. Accordingly, some 160 hectares are cleared annually. In the tropics, the drivers of deforestation and their development over time have been extensively studied. However, surprisingly little is known about the drivers of deforestation outside the tropics and developing countries. In the first systematic investigation of the Swiss national database on permits for forest clearances from 2001 to 2017, we revealed that most clearance permits are granted for infrastructure projects. In terms of the number of approved clearance applications, transport related reasons have been by far the most important contributors to clearances, followed by constructions, water supply and water construction related reasons. However, the underlying indirect drivers of forest clearances, such as demographic pressure, need for renewable energy infrastructure, urban sprawl or the distance to waters or roads, are not yet well understood. In this presentation, I present results from a spatial econometric analysis of the underlying drivers of forest clearances in Switzerland between 2001-2017. Based on this case study, I will try to generalize my findings for further countries. Knowledge about these drivers is important as a basis for future policy-making and to provide data-driven findings in a currently heated debate on competing land-use options and potential reforms of the forest clearance ban. My study adds to the growing body of literature on trade-offs between conservation and sustainable economy development that are pressing in many European countries.